

BOOK REVIEW

Ronald Russell, ed. *Focusing the Whole Brain: Transforming Your Life with Hemispheric Synchronization*. Charlottesville, Va.: Hampton Roads, 2004. xviii + 317 pp. \$11.00 (\$10.00 to TMI members).

Reviewed by Matthew Fike, PhD

Like its companion, *Using the Whole Brain* (1993), Ronald Russell's newest book is an anthology of essays dealing primarily with applications of Hemi-Sync® in a wide variety of fields. Although it lacks the tidy organization of the earlier volume's main section (body, mind, spirit), it covers some of the same topics, breaks plenty of new ground, and may be justifiably called an "update." This time there are forty-six essays covering the use of Hemi-Sync in the following areas: personal growth, young children, education, medicine, mental health, sleep, nursing homes, the business world, Hemi-Sync in Europe, and animals. There is a section of articles in which technology is applied to Hemi-Sync to document its effect on the brain, and the volume concludes with a chapter entitled "Gallimaufry" that includes some of the most interesting essays, which happen not to fit any of the earlier rubrics. The book also includes a CD called *The Way of Hemi-Sync*, narrated by Bob Monroe.

The experimental articles provide what James D. Lane calls the kind of "systematic evidence that will convince the professional community and the public of the therapeutic benefits of Hemi-Sync." Most of the essays in *Focusing the Whole Brain*, however, are anecdotal rather than experimental, and some are primarily—or even entirely—composed of case studies. What emerges from these portions of the book is an unofficial thesis that one might cast as follows. Although Hemi-Sync is not a "cure," a "panacea," or a "magic bullet," it is both a valuable resource in itself and a helpful complement to a wide variety of treatments and pursuits, especially psychotherapy and Reiki healing. The technology is especially effective if the therapist is psychic. Besides being inexpensive, noninvasive, and nonaddictive, Hemi-Sync does not force but rather invites, and the most potent invitations come from *Remembrance* and *Sleeping through the Rain*, which are mentioned more frequently than any other selections.

Along with the foregoing broad strokes, one chapter and a number of individual essays in *Focusing the Whole Brain* are particularly noteworthy. The most important chapter may be "The Mind: Psychiatry and Psychotherapy." The premise, as Ken Wilber puts it in a passage quoted in a later chapter, is that if one unites the shadow and the persona, then the "total ego" can become more integrated. This pseudo-Jungian language is a bit imprecise. For Jung, "individuation" involves bringing to conscious awareness a repressed part of the psyche like the shadow in order to diminish the role of the Ego and promote the integration of the Self. But

whatever terminology one uses, the point is the same: Hemi-Sync in a clinical setting helps make the unconscious more accessible.

In “Hemi-Sync as an Adjunct to Pediatric Physical Therapy,” one of the book’s most moving essays, Jacqueline Mast recounts her own psychic experiences at an early age on her family’s ranch, her use of Hemi-Sync with babies and young children, and a psychic experience with a terminally ill child. The child transports the author—without Hemi-Sync—to a “peaceful place” that echoes the rural setting of her youth; the little girl seems to comfort her therapist rather than the other way around. This piece is thus both nicely unified and subtly ironic.

The most delightful essay, “*METAMUSIC* to Enhance Physical and Emotional Comfort in Animals,” conveys the image of author Suzanne Morris’s Abyssinian cat asleep on her lap listening to Hemi-Sync through custom-fitted headphones. The objective of using Hemi-Sync is to help the dysfunctional little beast overcome the trauma resulting from a move—and it works. *Midsummer Night* may be the hero of the essay, but Salem the cat steals the show and wins the reader’s heart.

A number of further superlatives are possible. The most eloquent essay is Peter Spiro’s description of his experiences with Hemi-Sync in inner city classrooms, told in lovingly poetic prose. In the most informative essay as regards Hemi-Sync’s development, Barbara Bullard discusses the creation of *Remembrance*, *Einstein’s Dream*, and other recordings in connection with the “convergent zones” in the prefrontal lobes that enable the hemispheres to synchronize. Helene N. Guttman provides the book’s most surprising fact, that deaf people can use Hemi-Sync effectively by placing the headphones over the carotid arteries or “approximately one inch above, and slightly behind, each ear.” And the book’s most hopeful detail is that although Hemi-Sync still strikes some conservatives as satanic, even their resistance crumbles when they try one of the recordings in a time of personal need.

Some of the essays just mentioned and others in *Focusing the Whole Brain* will be familiar to TMI members because they first appeared in *The Hemi-Sync® Journal*. Other reprints include technical articles by James D. Lane from *Physiology & Behavior* and by F. Holmes Atwater from *Captain of My Ship, Master of My Soul*. *Focusing the Whole Brain* contains nothing as grippingly gruesome as the earlier volume’s excerpts on reconstructive surgery from Gari Carter’s *Healing Myself*, but it is good to have so many old favorites all together in one place.

Russell’s new book is also notable for what it does not say about Hemi-Sync. Many of the essays ask unanswered questions or raise unexplored issues, which suggests the need for a third volume in the *Whole Brain* series. Chapters could be devoted to uses of Hemi-Sync in the following areas: teenagers, AIDS, crystals, contact with a baby’s soul, lucid dreaming, Reiki, and higher education.

Indeed, as Russell and his wife, Jill, are quite right to conclude in their coauthored piece, “With a Scottish Accent,” “One of the most fascinating things about Hemi-Sync is that there seems to be no end to the uses to which it can be put.”

[Matthew Fike received a PhD from the University of Michigan in 1988. He currently teaches in the Department of English at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, S.C.]

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